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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: UAE AND UNICEF CONTINUE TO ASSIST REPATRIATED
CAMEL JOCKEYS

Sensitive but unclassified; please protect accordingly.

- ¶1. (U) Summary: The effort to repatriate young foreign camel jockeys was the headline focus of the UAE's anti-TIP efforts just a few years ago; the follow-up continues unabated, with significant UAE effort and resource applied to the rehabilitation of prior jockeys. End summary.
- ¶2. (SBU) UAE camel races in the spring of 2009 had all of the energy of prior years, but with no small children as jockeys. Small robots have replaced the riders and have become somewhat of an art form of their own. Transmitters on the robots urge the camel forward, as does a rotating whip controlled remotely. Pol officers spent some time at the formal races, on the training tracks, and among the holding pens and found no sign of the young boys who had been a key feature in the sport some years earlier.
- ¶3. (SBU) The UAEG effort to repatriate youngsters brought from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sudan, and Mauritania to assist in camel racing (and camel-related farm work) got much attention in 2005 and 2006, since which time the UAEG and UNICEF have been working not only to return the former jockeys to their homelands but also to reinvigorate their communities and support their education. The repatriation of a reported 1,077 former jockeys by 2006 was only part of the program. Others have been assisted -- including some who had already returned home but were identified as former jockeys in need of assistance.
- ¶4. (SBU) UNICEF Gulf Area Representative Dr. Ayman Abu Laban told PolOff May 13 that he is satisfied with the ongoing program. UNICEF's primary role is to support communities, he said, using the UAEG's \$9 million donation to improve conditions in communities to which the boys have returned. That 3-year project should be completed this year. UAEG payments to individual boys are a separate matter coordinated directly by the UAE Ministry of Interior (MoI) and its partners in source countries. Dr. Ayman said UNICEF steps aside when compensation is administered. The price tag to the UAE therefore exceeds the \$9 million UNICEF program; while total costs are unclear, a recent press report of a \$221,000 donation to assist 91 young boys in Mauritania is characteristic. The UAE press notes the periodic travel of UAE officials making similar payments and following up on rehabilitation programs.
- ¶5. (SBU) Press anecdotes suggest that hundreds of former jockeys (well over the 1,077) have been assisted in four primary source countries, benefiting from medical, education, and social assistance. The UAEG notes "26 social and economic projects related to rehabilitating and reintegrating the former camel jockeys into their home societies." Post cannot confirm specific expenditures, but will continue to seek data from Brigadier Nasser al-Awadhi al-Minhali, Chairman of the UAE Special Committee for Rehabilitation of Camel Jockeys. The complex repatriation effort faces some

resistance, according to anecdotal reports, from families and communities who lost extra income when the boys came home. Some of the boys reportedly seek to return to the UAE for employment when they reach adulthood.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The plight of young jockeys evolved with the sport of camel racing and, when exploitation resulted, gave the UAE opportunity to show its humanity without losing enthusiasm for local tradition. The apparent success of the repatriation effort, and ongoing UAEG attention to rehabilitating former jockeys and assisting their communities, seems to indicate ongoing UAEG sincerity in turning a new page. End comment.

OLSON